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THE SPECIALS
HAZEL O'CONNOR
TEARDROP EXPLODES
CABARET VOLTAIRE
PREFAB SPROUT
DURAN DURAN

FREE BADGE INSIDE

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A CRAZY PROJECT
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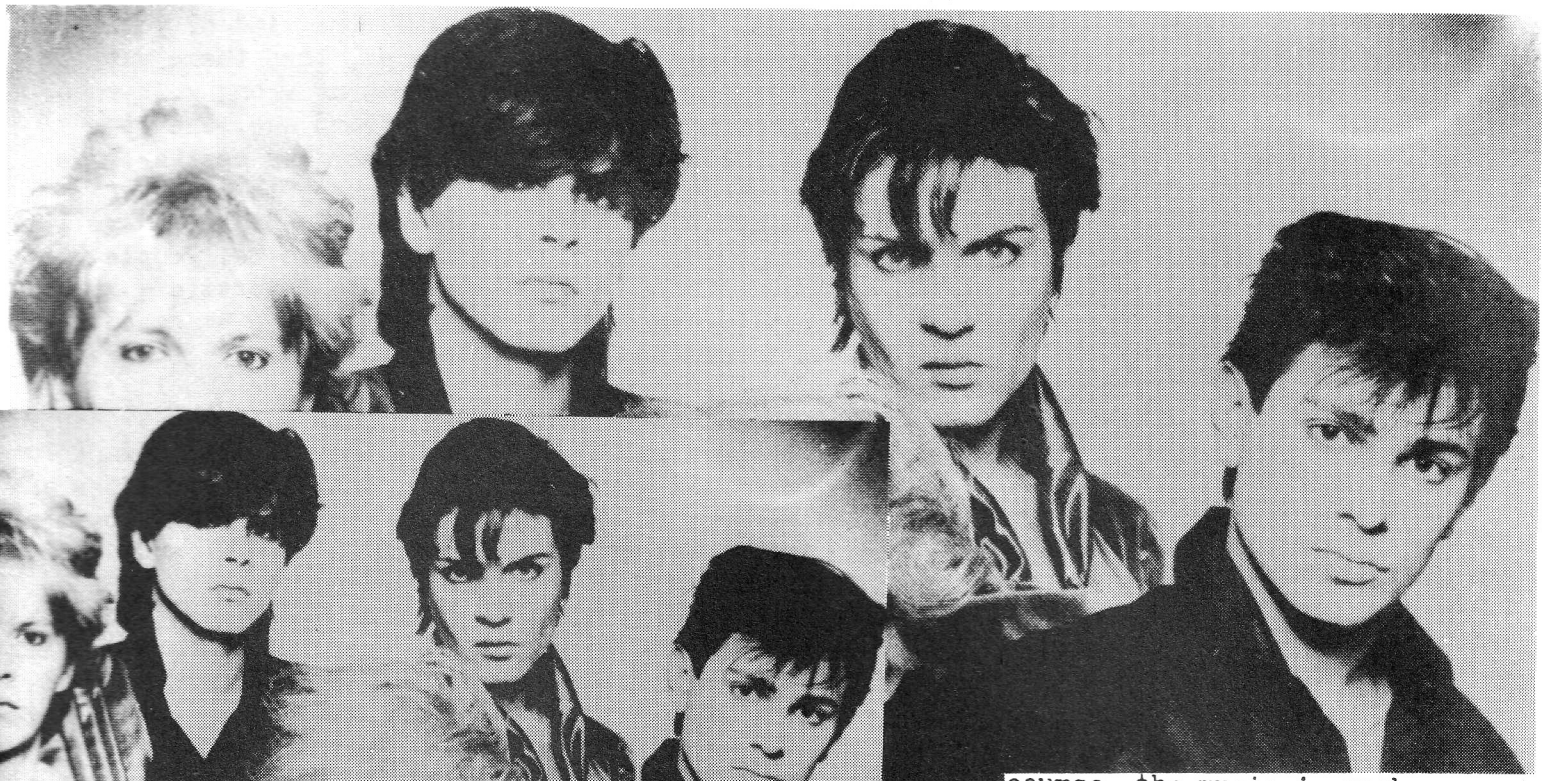
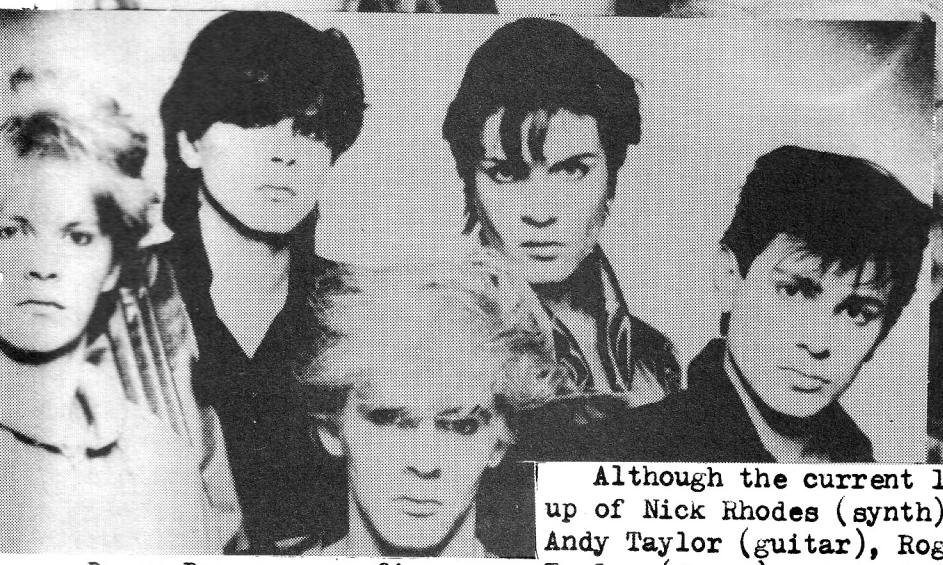




Duran Duran

Duran Duran are a five-piece band from Birmingham who believe in the much discussed equation that Popular Music equals Escapism. To demonstrate their considerable belief, they dye their hair and wear mascara, dress in what might be termed as 'moderne' fashions, and write songs which are basically nowt about owt, or vice versa as the case may be.

This is not to say that they are a bad group to escape to: at their recent City Hall appearance I was as impressed as anyone with their tasteful use of synthesizers and disco-rhythms; but, rather, if you DO decide to chip away at the veneer of Duran Duran, don't be surprised if at the centre you find precious little of substance.

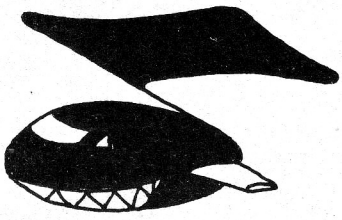
Although the current line up of Nick Rhodes (synth), Andy Taylor (guitar), Roger Taylor (drums), Simon LeBon (vocals) and John Taylor (bass) has only been together since June 1980, the original Duran Duran stretches back to 1978, when Nick Rhodes decided to put together a band who's main aim it would be to be... umm...'different'.

"We started playing about two years ago, and were nothing like we are now," Nick reminisces. "We were playing avant-garde stuff and had rhythm units, two bass players and used slides and all kinds of things; it was very obscure. Nowadays, we're more commercial, and what we're trying to do is fuse disco-style bass and drums with textured synthesizer noise. We're trying to get the whole kind of 'concept' thing together at the moment, because I think that after the Punk thing, bands have really lacked in image. But, of course, the music is much more important."

Of course. Image, however, is one thing that Duran Duran have obviously paid great attention to. Comparisons to Ultravox!, or Orchestral Manoeuvres, I suggest, are inevitable.

"You couldn't possibly NOT class us with bands like those," agrees Simon LeBon. "But although they've got the electronic side [illegible]'ve got, we are far [illegible]rganic than they are. To us, they sound cold and sterile."

Simon LeBon joined Duran Duran after moving to Brum from London, where he'd fronted one of the more faceless Punk bands of the time. Andy Taylor travelled from our own dear Newcastle, where he'd become tired of waiting for something to happen. It's been a good move for all concerned, with five major record companies quoted as 'taking an interest' in the band's development, all eager to release their debut single, 'Planet Earth', a synth-saturated disco-rhythm number. Supple disco-rhythms are the mainstay of 90% of Duran Duran's set, in fact,



and work to great effect on two songs in particular: 'Late Bar' - a tale of romance and lonliness in an all-night drinking establishment - and the menacing 'Friends Of Mine'.

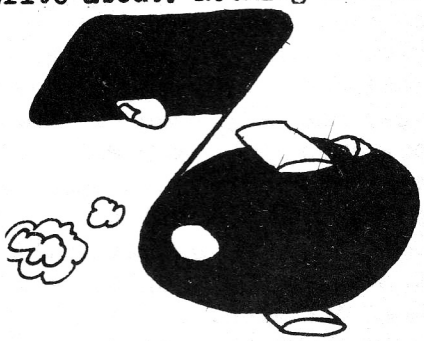
"As things progressed, we decided that we wanted to get more 'funk' based," Nick tells me. "I was very interested in disco, and although our vocal sound isn't disco at all, our rhythm section is disco based. It's very difficult to pin down our sound or put us in a bag with other bands, but I suppose Talking Heads 'Remain In Light' album has similar ideas on it to our own."

Andy Taylor becomes restless and feels that it's time to throw in his two penn'arth. "We are a very original band. I know that people would like to put us in a bag with the likes of Spandau Ballet, but they won't be able to. The FOUNDERS of this so-called 'new scene' - I'm talking about bands using disco rhythms - are THIS band! Nick had the idea for this sort of thing YEARS ago. We're not trying to COPY anybody!"

A truly innovative, original band at last? Well, not exactly, but it can't be denied that Duran Duran do, in fact, have a great many good ideas. Take, for example, the role played by guitarist Andy Taylor. Whereas many guitarists in bands of this type favour a kind of 'spacey' sound, Taylor goes for a neo-Heavy Metal razor accent which completely bombards the senses; against the back-drop of disco bass and drums, the effect, as some might say, is shattering. Nick Rhodes contribution, too, is vital to the overall make-up (no pun intended) of the Duran Duran sound. On the slow paced 'To The Shore', his doomy, evocative synth sound steers the song well clear of any electronic cliches and into the realms of being a minor classic. On an unannounced instrumental, also, his ability to use synth noise to create mental images was most impressive.

But it's when I talk about the actual subject matter of the songs to lyricist Simon LeBon that serious flaws in the Duran Duran philosophy become apparant.

"Basically, I write lyrics about anything that I consider to be interesting. There are lots of different things in our songs: sex is something that I write about a lot," explains Simon. "Feeling, human emotions, That's the kind of thing I write about. Nothing at all



about the state of the country: absolutely NOTHING political." He says it like he means it. "Listen, I used to be in a Punk band, right, and I used to go onstage and preach to people, and it was just so BORING! I think that the most interesting thing that you can write about is people."

"We try to avoid all this political catastrophe that seems to be going on at the minute," adds Nick Rhodes. "All this business about being left-wing this and right-wing that - that's something that we're not interested in, not in the slightest." To my amazement he adds, "Politics should be kept well out of music!"

Andy Taylor pursues this philosophy: "The trouble nowadays is that if you don't take some kind of political stance, then there must be something wrong with you.

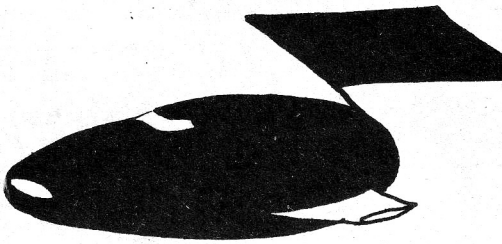
"Years ago, when the business was healthy," he continues, to my utter disbelief, "things were like they should be. People played music to entertain - and that was all! It's supposed to be escapism; you go to see a show in a theatre like this - it's just supposed to be escapism. If people want to hear anti-Thatcher songs and that kind of thing, there're plenty of other bands they can go and see."

Nick Rhodes: "I think that the music papers are getting much too political as well. I think that the reason things are getting like this is because there is a lack of real substance in music at the moment. The reason why the music industry is declining is because at the minute there is a real shortage of good new bands. If those bands were there, then people would buy their records. It doesn't matter if people are short of money or not, people would still buy record of good bands. There just aren't that many good new bands."

Duran Duran, despite their insular, misguided views on the relationship between music and politics, are indeed a Good New Band who, I'm certain, we're going to hear a lot more of in the future. With the likes of Spandau Ballet, Ultravox! and Japan - sorry about the comparisons - currently in vogue (and Vogue), this Brum-based band should have little difficulty in cutting in on a piece of the action.

Not, however, for Gang Of Four fans.

Mal Armstrong.



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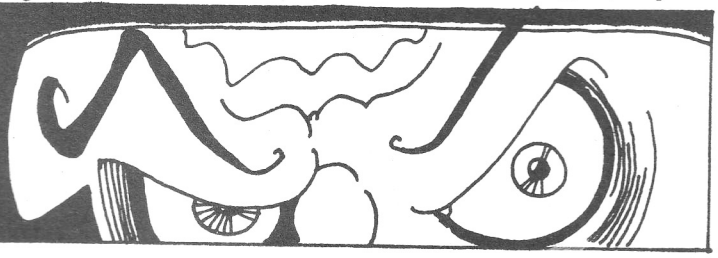

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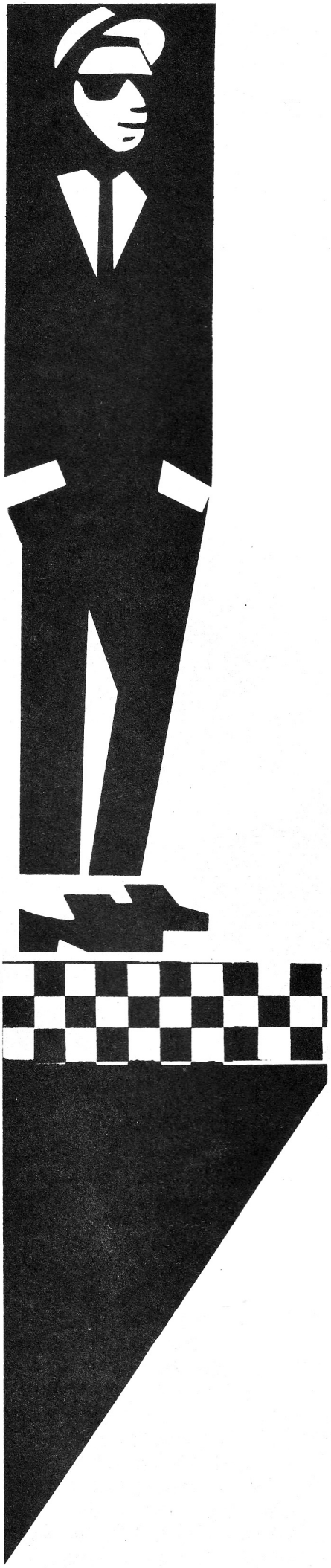
THE SPECIALS

Some things, the simple things (like a bag of licorice torpedoes, Steve Jones' guitar sound, or a copy of Health and Efficiency) at the right time, are just Entertainment City. Seeing The Specials is like those magic moments, though spread out over an hour-plus of their average stage set. Yes, fellow golfers, if you find yourself suffering from a spot of mid-week l'ennui, don't really feel like taking the Taylors up on their invitation for Martinis down at the squash club, preferring to tap a foot and somehow score a pint of The Mayfair Ballroom's worst brew off one of your mates who's just been paid, then The Specials A.K.A. are just what the doctor ordered. I witnessed them in action recently and, I mean this most sincerely folks, they were SHIT HOT - even the often over-zealous elements in the audience could not detract from the sheer unpretentious magnificence of Coventry's Finest.

Seeing the band really brought home what an excellent varied and power-packed catalogue of material this particular 2-Tone gang have to choose from these days. Their set opened with the sheer dynamic tension of Roddy Radiation's 'Concrete Jungle', the entire stage a veritable sea of movement with Terry Hall, Neville Staples, Sir Horace Gentleman on Ace Bass, and rivvum guitarist Lynval Golding having a bad case of the Boogie Disease shot through with a bit of Midlands Skank, the energy level bouncing into the red. They moved on with newer stuff off their highly recommended, Fab-Gear 2-Tone album, 'More Specials', such as the effortless, breezy Pop swing of 'Hey Little Rich Girl'; Lynval's superb shoulder-shrug (and sometime single) 'Do Nothing'; the mighty, MIGHTY 'Rat Race'; a stompin' 'Too Much, Too Young'; and a version of 'Gangsters' to end 'em all!!!



and Terry Hall's strides were the only 2-Tone garment on that stage, Jack!!

You try getting an interview with the bleeders though! Your scribe skulked around the sound-check before the gig to no avail, and in the end had to settle for a brief chat-ette with Bassman Horace Gentleman, and a few grunts from singer Terry Hall (which aren't worth printing anyway...)

As for the other boys in the band, Jerry Dammers looked too preoccupied with trying to pull a young Mod-ette type in shocking pink pedal-pushers, and the other geezers were talking amongst themselves. Maybe I wasn't cut out for this lark!

Anyhow, Sir Horace was at least chatty and amiable, a good lad, as it were. What about America, Horace?

"Well, when I went over, I thought, I've read all my Kerouac books, and I've seen all the movies, and I really know what it's like! Well, it's totally different!! What you tend to think is, because it's the same language, it'll be alright, no problem, but there are really slight, subtle cultural differences, which are really weird. And they have all these irritating things - like in shops, where they say 'Have a nice day' or 'Enjoy your day', 'cos they are told to say it, so things like compliments mean absolutely nothing."

The Specials experience must have been a new one to the Yanks. I mean, the nearest thing they ever get to reggae is when The Eagles do their token 'white reggae' number. And Ska? Bluebeat? Ask chief Knack-er, Doug Fieger: "Yeah, man, I know all about Ska and Bluebeat, maaaaaan, my mother's got all of Harry Belafonte's records back home..."

See what the boys was up against on their first US tour? Must have been like taking religion to the unedjicated masses. How about it, Horace?

"Education to the masses?

We went for a laugh!! You're far too much into journalism, I'm afraid! Yeah, I know what you mean, but it was more like (Affects Yank voice) 'Hey, let's go see the trendy noo band from England tonite'. So you just got all these trendy people coming to the gigs, and all the Anglophiles - those that buy English records just because they're English. IT's very difficult to know how in fact we did. I mean, there's a bloke here from the record company who could tell you how many units we shifted - market, market, promote, promote. I dunno - perhaps next time, if we go again, I'd like to tour with a band like, say, Blue Oyster Cult, so at least you're playing to a true cross-section of the American public, and at least you'd know what they really thought of you.

"But it WAS a bit of a challenge, y'know; there were a lot of Bizness people about especially in Los Angeles. It was all 'Hey! I'm the bass guitarist with Styx's roadie' or 'Hey! I'm Rod Stewart's drummer's drugs roadie, and I loved your show!'"

Of course, although The Specials music draws heavily on reggaefied sounds both ancient and modern, the band have other roots too. Whilst in the States, the band - or rather, Jerry Dammers - got to see the famed New Orleans

boogie pianist, Professor Longhair, on his final gig before the Hand Of Blight claimed him as yet another victim. Did Horace see any of his own personal faves?

"Well, with Professor Longhair, that was more Jerry than me. I was too busy getting drunk! Lowell George had already died when I got there, so there wasn't really that many people worth seeing, apart from Tom Waits, and I couldn't find him, although we did stay at the Tropicana Motel in L.A., where he lives!"

As anyone who's seen the final reel of 'Easy Rider' will know, the American Race are Conservative to the point of being sometimes downright reactionary, and anything that seems remotely new is apt to get short shrift from the less...er...Liberal-minded, shall we say, elements of an audience, particularly offa them Good Ol' Boys down South. In other words, Horace, did the band encounter any aggro?

"No, not really. We played Oklahoma City, playing down-bill to the Police, but at the last minute they cancelled so it was a case of 'Well, instead of The Police, here's a band from England whom you've never heard of, who don't even play Rock'n'Roll', and on we came. And I must admit, we were nervous, but did really well, all these people shouting 'YEEEHOOO' and 'ROCK and RAWL'. We were really pleased with it. It's like I was saying before, about a true cross-section. I was well pleased with it!"

As I said before, 'More Specials' is a great platter, easily one of the most musically adventurous and quite daringly different albums to come out in 1980, certainly one of my Top Ten for that year. Side one is more standard Specials' fare, but nonetheless quality stuff, while Side two ranges from the soft-shoe-shuffle of 'Stereotypes', through Neville Staples dub-wise coda, through to 'Holiday Fortnight' piece of Benidorm-type holiday muzak. If Cliff Mitchelmore doesn't choose that as his theme music for 'Holiday 81', there is simply no justice in this world. There's also my favourite, a deliciously smooth soft soul-samba, entitled 'I Can't Stand It', on which Terry Hall croons alongside erstwhile Bodysnatcher Rhoda Dakar. 'International Jet Set' rounds off the album in suitably eerie fashion. In short, it's a great piece of work, so much more than I'd expected, revealing new sides to the band that I'd previously thought didn't exist. Were The Specials aware of having to make a new departure, as it were, for their second album?

"It was more a question of 'Right, we're now in a very difficult position - we can either do what all these silly people who buy sub-standard hats and badges and ties that drop apart after two months want, or else we can go out and do what we want to do. Before we were in the public eye, we were playing that sort of stuff, it wasn't particularly vogue or popular, we just thought we'd change it 'cos everyone else was doing it. And we were listening to different things, we kind of left music 'cos we were staying in Holiday Inns. If anything, it's a reaction against that circus, that lifestyle. You can get really wrapped up in it; do an album, tour Britain, tour Europe, tour America, tour Japan, do another album, tour - you can disappear up your own arse!"

Things happened very quickly with the 2-Tone operation. I mean, it almost seemed that one week they'd broken into the charts with 'Gangsters', and a week or so later along came all these other 2-Tone siblings - Madness, The Selecter, The Beat and, a little later, The Bodysnatchers. And although I'm sure they wouldn't agree with it, Bastards owe a lot of their success to The Specials, being given their initial important gig exposure as a late addition to the first 2-Tone tour when Madness high-tailed it to do some gigs of their own, and it was The Specials groundwork which paved the way for their arrival on the scene. But was 2-Tone a case of Too Much Too Soon, as opposed to Too Much Too Young?

Horace: "Well...gulp... er....um....YES!"

Well what about your ex-label mates, Horace? Seems to me that The Beat are by far the most musically stimulating and lyrically intriguing band to stray from the 2-Tone fold, and Madness and The Selecter, although being Good Entertainment, seem at times very limited musically. What about that, Horace?

"That's basically their problem. We got them to the stage where they were in the public eye, which is what they wanted - which is what ANY band wants - and, of course, now they've moved on. You could apply that to the whole of the New Wave thing, though. Bands like Chelsea who were around at the beginning - they had the same chance, it's down to them. I'ts not The Clash's fault that Chelsea aren't famous."

Any hard feelings between The Selecter and The Specials over the formers departure from 2-Tonehood?

"No, not really. I wasn't around when they left, and they haven't been around to beat us up, so things are OK!"

The most recent acquisition to the 2-Tone roster have been a little less than startling. The Swinging Cats, who supported The Specials on their Autumn '80 tour, are nice guys but irredeemably dreadful, despite making a razzy little single, the title of which eludes me, although I know one side was 'Mantovani', and which cost all of 74 quid to make. Any other plans for

THE SPECIALS

"Well, there's a Rico album coming out, which is amazing, but apart from that ... I think that we've reached an important stage. We don't really know exactly what we're going to do. We've not got any concrete plans after this coming few months. We're going to suspend operations for a while, while we sit around..."

So, The Specials are in a bit of a no-man's land. Despite making a challenging album which draws on many different styles, whilst still retaining the band's strong sense of identity, it's going to be the NEXT L.P. which will be all-important. And, kiddies, here's one fan who's going to stick around to find out what it's like - God, Ronald Raygun and Leonid Brezhnev willing.

Allan Robinson

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the TEARDROP EXPLODES

The Teardrop explodes are yet another band to emerge from the healthy, if somewhat overcrowded, Liverpool music scene. Their basic roots have ran parallel with the rest of the bands associated with the current 'Merseyside Boom', which all started at Erics, one of the country's more ambitious rock clubs. Although many bands were initially involved in the boom, few made it past garage-land status. Big In Japan and The Yachts were two who went onto bigger things, but one of the most important combos in the early days were The Crucial Three, who were formed in 1977 by Teardrops vocalist/bassist, Julian Cope, along with Ian McCulloch (now with Echo and The Bunnymen) and Pete Wylie (mentor of Wah! Heat).

Julian moved to Merseyside from the Midlands to study drama and teacher training at college, but, on arriving, found that he was more interested in forming a band.

"Most of the stuff I was doing seemed pointless. I was going down to Eric's most nights and getting into the Punk thing; so I left college to form a band." (Easy, isn't it!)

A series of name changes ensued, with Wylie and McCulloch leaving to form their respective combos. They were replaced by Paul Simpson on keyboards and guitarist Mick Finkler. Still in need of a drummer, they were put in touch with Gary Dwyer, and despite the fact that he was something of a novice on the drum-kit, he fitted in well. The band played their debut gig at Eric's supporting The Bunnymen, by which time they had pinched the Teardrop moniker from a Marvel comic.

Paul Simpson soon departed, and although the band soldiered on for a while as a three -piece, the vital contribution of Simpson's billowing keyboards simply had to be replaced if the band were to go on to greater things.

Enter David Balfe, manager of the band and co-director of Zoo Records, as the replacement for Simpson, albeit on a semi-permanent basis.

Shortly after Balfe had joined, Mick Finkler was sacked, due to the fact that the band - or, rather, David Balfe - felt that Finkler was holding them back by being too complacent and not having enough ambition. Alan Gill was recruited in his place.

With all the comings and goings of these illustrious Liverpudlians, I asked the band how they got on with their former members nowadays. David Balfe explained:

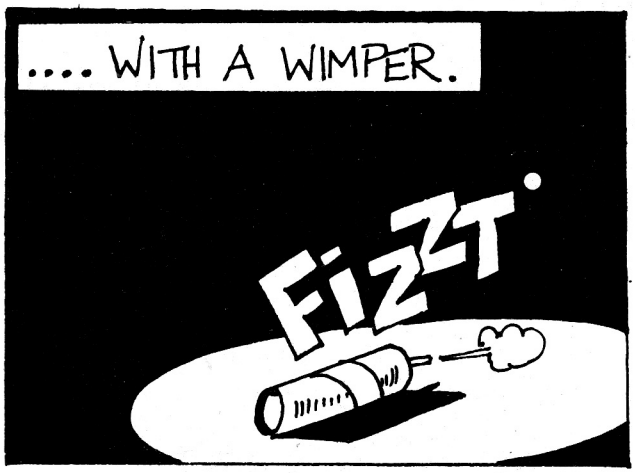
"I think that we get on with them just great, now that they're NOT members of the band. I don't think that Julian gets on too well with them mind you."

"I get on great with Wah! Heat great," responds Julian.

Alan Gill, however, reckons that he doesn't like much of the music coming out of Liverpool these days, but fails to explain why.

FACT: Liverpool is currently turning out bands as fast as Leyland's turn out Metros on a good day. So I asked David Balfe what he thought the reason was for Liverpool's recently acquired new lease of life. Was it because of Merseyside's previous reputation, or was it because of the fact that bands from that part of the country are genuinely better than bands anywhere else?

"Well, it's certainly not the reputation - Liverpool has never had any musical reputation to speak of. (Does this character actually come from Liverpool? I suppose they haven't got much



of a football team either. - Ed.) Take Newcastle, for instance: bands around here probably don't get a lot of Press exposure, and at one time it was like that in Liverpool. Press coverage is important. For all I know, the bands around here might be total dog-crap and don't deserve any kind of exposure; then again, they might be great and just haven't got the sus to get themselves known; or maybe they've just been unlucky not to get the press coverage."

Throughout the whole 30 minutes of the interview (that's all I could stand), Mr Balfe made it blatantly obvious that he loathed critics. This was never more apparent than when I asked him about how he felt about NME calling the Teardrops 'Just another band - a psychodelic Thin Lizzy'.

Balfe: "I just think they're big heads. I don't pay much attention to the Press these days; it's just one person's point of view.

"I criticise things myself. I say I don't like this and I don't like that, but it seems like everyone who sets themselves up as a critic - like yourself - seems to think they've got the right qualifications to Be a critic. I mean, what ARE the qualifications to be a critic? EVERBODY reckons they've got good taste!

"Most journalists are so because they are good writers, not because they've got good points of view - if there's such a thing. I'm not into the whole thing of critics."

Part of David Balfe's dislike of the press could be attributed to the bad reviews 'Kilimanjaro', the Teardrops debut album, received. One major weekly music paper tagged it 'the biggest anti-climax of the year'. And although I don't believe the album deserved the flak it received, it still fell well short of my own personal expectations. The fact that all of the band's previous singles were included came as a bit of a disappointment, and even the ones which had been re-re-recorded were nowhere near as good as the original mixes.

By far the best of the singles is their last - and least successful - 'When I Dream', an instantly likeable little ditty which after only one hearing I couldn't get out of my head.

Those of you with a good memory and even better musical taste will remember the Teardrops' first three singles. There was the unnerving 'Sleeping Gas'; the dislocated 'Bouncing Babies'; and the warmer, more deceptive, 'Treason'. Apart from the fact that these songs are so good, I cannot see the rehashes on 'Kilimanjaro' impressing the non-converts.

The new material on 'Kilimanjaro' shows a different Teardrops, much denser, more arranged than before. You get the feeling that Julian Cope - the heart of the band - is finding it hard going under the weight of the synths and the heavy arrangements. This could be attributed to the increasing role of Balfe in the studio (he an fellow co-director of Zoo records, Bill Drummond, produced most of the album). I can't help feeling that if Julian Cope had been given more of a free hand in the production of the album, they would have come up with a far superior piece of merchandise.

So, until Julian can assert his authority upon the band, I'll just have to sit and wait hopefully for the next album, and hope that it will not be as disappointing as 'Kilimanjaro'.

Colin Green

THE HAZEL O'CONNOR INTERVIEW

Mal Armstrong meets the lass from Breaking Glass

It was about a year ago when it first started. The A&M Press Office people began bombarding number 86 Nile St. with news that a certain Ms Hazel O'Connor - who nobody around here had ever heard of - had landed the lead role in a soon-to-be-released movie called 'Breaking Glass', and that the soundtrack album of the same name would be in the shops within the next couple of months. Ms O'Connor, apparently, had composed all the songs on the soundtrack album. Ms O'Connor, they would have us believe, was gonna be The Next Big Thing. Big deal, we thought.

The Press handouts kept arriving with alarming regularity. Ms O'Connor, I was informed, had previously been an au-pair for a European gun-dealer; a painter in Amsterdam; a street-actor in Paris; a shop assistant in a hippie health-food joint; a layabout in Marrakesh; an English teacher and model in Tokyo; and a dancer in Beruit. Wonder what she does in her spare time, we thought.

When the movie eventually arrived in Newcastle, I went to see it and thought it OK as far as Rock Biz movies go. I had to admit, however, that Ms O'Connor's portrayal of the naive Kate was one of its more definite pluses.

Still, I had the impression that Hazel O'Connor, although I'd never met her and had little solid reason for thinking such, would be a ruthless, stop-at-nothing, career-minded, snobby bitch in real life, and I gave the 'Breaking Glass' album a couple of listens and didn't even bother to write a review of it.

Nevertheless, the 'Breaking Glass' album sold remarkably well for a debut platter, and the single extracted from it, 'Eighth Day', made it into the top ten. Despite a considerable amount of savage media comment, Hazel O'Connor and her aptly named backing band, Megahype, had made it into the realms of being 'pop stars'.

Supported by her debut nationwide tour, her second album, 'Sons And Lovers', was released to, once again, less than critical acclaim at the end of 1980. Not that

anything the critics had to say was likely to influence public opinion as far as Hazel O'Connor and Megahype were concerned. On TV, for example, she proved herself able to cope with awkward or inept questions by bouncing them back at the interviewer with an ease that probably had Bob Geldof turning green with envy.

So when I learned that her tour was to make a short stop in Newcastle last December, I decided that the very least I could do was to try to bag an interview with her, even though I was fairly certain she'd refuse any kind of formal or informal chit-chat, her being a much sought-after pop celebrity and all that.

Wrong again, Armstrong.

There are people who try desperately hard to be 'nice' and others who are genuinely pleasant and cheerful. A degree in psychology isn't necessary to be able to distinguish between the two categories. Hazel O'Connor is a genuinely nice person, full of good intentions, and absolutely nothing like I thought she would be. The half-hour I spent chatting with her was, perhaps, one of the more pleasant times I encountered all winter. I even re-examined her albums again - this time with an open mind - and although I'm still not 100% struck by her music, closer listening reveals that there's a bit more to it than I thought at first.

I began by asking her about the hugely successful 'Breaking Glass' movie. Had she enjoyed doing it?

"In retrospect I did, but I can't honestly say that it's great fun making films in general. When you're actually working it's good fun, but when you're having to get up at six o'clock every morning it's not such good fun! And you never get to see anybody either; I mean, I never got to see any of my friends for about three and a half months. We were working sixteen hours a day, six days a week. You're shut off from everything else, and that's not fun. It was great at the end though, when everything was finally put together; I felt a real sense of achievement."

Rumour had it that writer Brian Gibson had continually changed the script during filming, so that half the time nobody knew what they were doing, and that many of the original objectives had been cast aside for the sake of making a more 'sensational' movie. Did Hazel think the film had achieved its objectives?

"Yeah, I think it did," she answers, thoughtfully, "but only to a certain extent. Because - and this isn't a criticism, it's an.. er..observation - the producer and director should have decided what SORT of film they were gonna make - and what sort of market they were aiming at - with a much clearer sense of perspective. Y'know, like they did with 'Babylon'. 'Babylon' was to its own self true, and it's also been a commercial success. Have you seen it?" she enquires. No, I tell her, it hasn't arrived up here yet.

"Oh, well it's very good. It's number two in the film charts in London. I think its doing so well because it stayed true to its subject matter, and I think that 'Breaking Glass' tried to merge a number of different things together and it just didn't come off.

"I enjoyed the finished film, I don't think it's something to be ashamed of, I just think that they (the producer and director) didn't know as much as they might have done. But that's the type of thing you can't tell producers and directors, and anyway it's all hindsight now - I didn't know about it while we were filming. I was pleased with the part I played and it gave me a bit of a springboard, so I was happy."

Trying to organise a musical career AND devote time to acting must be a shade hectic. Are there any more Hazel O'Connor movie appearances in the pipeline?

"No, there's nothing at the minute, but I will definitely be doing some more films, maybe next year," she tells me, with great enthusiasm. "I've got a three picture deal with Paramount which I've got options on i.e. if I don't like the ideas they give to me, then I won't do the movie. At first, they wanted to assign me to pictures but I refused that because, well, I simply didn't need it, it just wasn't worth it. But as 'Breaking Glass' isn't doing too well in America at the moment, I don't think I've got much clout with them. Not that I'm too worried about it at the minute."

Musically, although not lyrically, Hazel's two albums so far differ greatly. Whereas 'Breaking Glass' sounded like it had been given maximum consideration by musicians and producer (Tony Visconti) alike, the more recent 'Sons And Lovers' sounds as though it was recorded with maximum haste. Much of it sounds forced and unnecessary, lacking the vital pop ingredient of fun. Composition-wise, it sounds hurried and strained, with few of the tracks reaching the standard set by 'Breaking Glass'. Was it an effort to get the material ready in time for release? Had Hazel had enough time to compose the songs for the second album?

"Well, I don't think the album has suffered at all, but had I not had those songs ready to record I would have had to turn my back on everything and gone and shut myself away for a few weeks," she says, a little taken aback that I don't think 'Sons And Lovers' is on a par with its predecessor. "I'm not a very prolific writer anyway. I write dribs and drabs usually, then stick it

HAZEL O'CONNOR

in a folder and come back to it later. I get most of my ideas for songs when I'm driving around late at night feeling bored. Most of my songs are written when I'm not working quite so hard, but it doesn't really matter.

"When I actually put my work together I like to be alone somewhere, so I usually go and stay in a hotel down in Sussex, 'cos I really like it there. I just closet myself away for a few weeks and plonk around on my few little instruments, putting everything into some kind of order."

Although 'Time', the single taken from 'Sons And Lovers', hasn't fared too well in the charts - 'Glass Houses' would have been a much better choice, I think - the enormous success of 'Eighth Day' was one of the main factors in putting Hazel where she is at the minute. Was she very surprised at the success of that single?

"Oh yeah! The single I wanted out at the time was 'Monsters In Disguise', but the record company changed that and insisted on 'Eighth Day'. I would never have chosen 'Eighth Day' as a single - shows how much I know about choosing singles!"

Finally, Hazel, everything seems to have happened a bit too quickly for some people's liking. One minute nobody had ever heard of you - the next you're being touted as everything from a female David Bowie to the possible saviour of the UK film industry. How are you coping with what really amounts to a heavy dose of overnight success?

"On the personal side of things my life hasn't changed at all. Really, I'm probably just a bit of a loudmouth, and I suppose that's one of the reasons how I've got where I am. But I don't let people bully me into doing things too much.

People in this business use all kinds of things to bully people with. And the things they've tried to bully me with have been money, prestige or whatever; but I don't give a bollock about all that because I know what I want to do and I'm DOING it! So if NME want to write that my songs are all about obvious things or they're crap etc, etc, etc, well let them, 'cos I really don't mind. People who write that kind of thing are usually rather inadequate people, who are really only pinpointing their own inadequacies.

"Sometimes that sort of thing can actually be a help, because one of the music papers wrote a dummy review for the single (Time') and I read it out to the audience at one gig; Birmingham, I think it was. That review accused anyone who liked 'Eighth Day' or 'Breaking Glass' of being a 'toytown punk', which is a GREAT insult to throw at your audience!

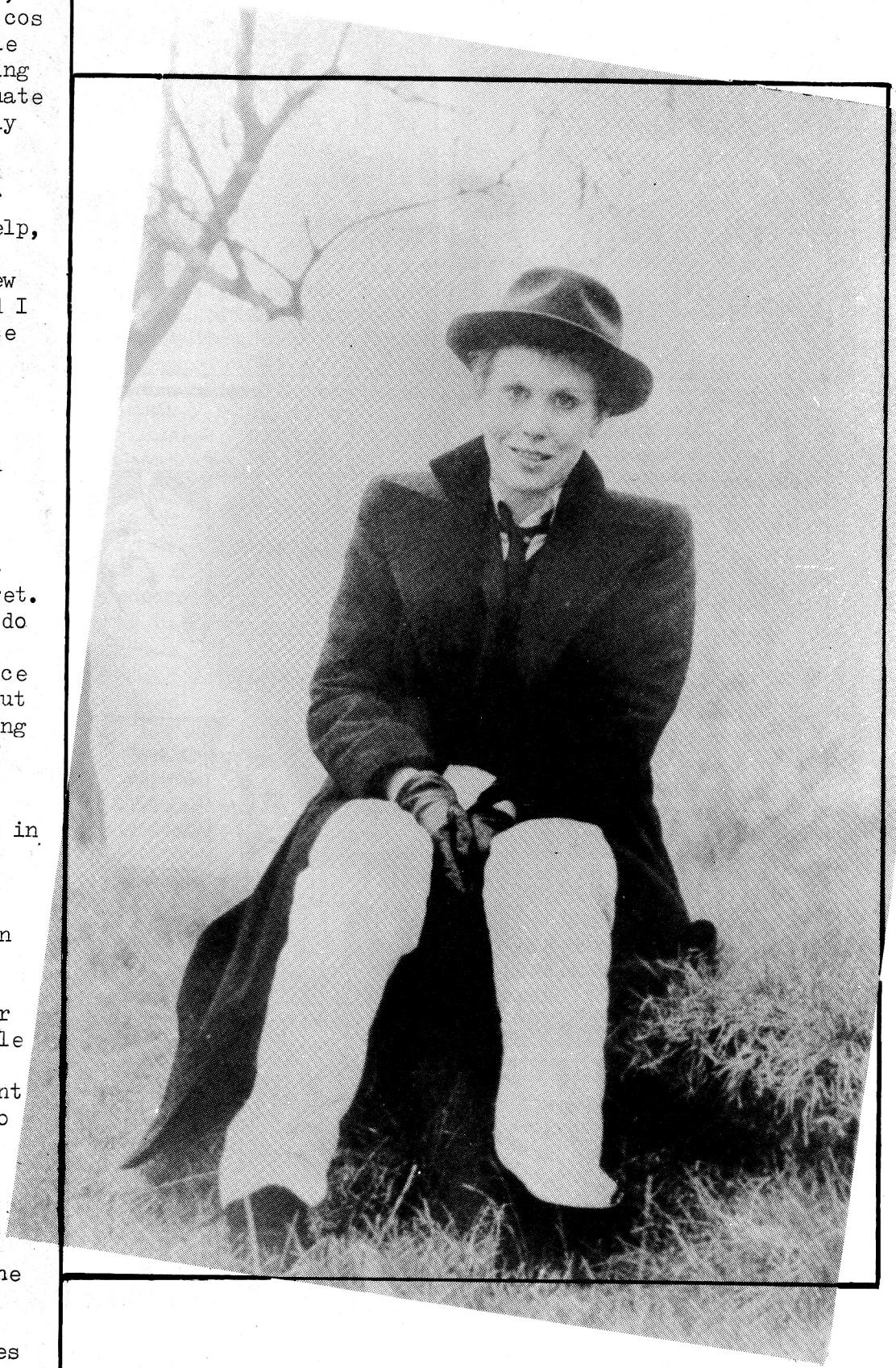
"But I can fight back - I can give BETTER than I get. But that's not the way to do things, is it?"

Like I said, she's a nice lady, Ms Hazel O'Connor. But I left the interview feeling that her problems are only about to begin. Not many people have managed to combine successful careers in both movie acting and pop music in recent years, and most who have tried have faded from the limelight in both departments with frightening speed. Hazel O'Connor is probably better equipped than most to tackle the entertainment world's equivalent of climbing Mount Everest, but she's going to have to come up with something far more potent than her severely disappointing second album if she's to continue with the musical side of things - and win the respect of the Music Press Doubting Thomas's who're already getting their knives sharpened.

I'm certain that should her double-assault fail, she'll still be successful in one of her chosen areas - my money's on the movies - and there's no doubt in my mind that she's going to be around for a long time to come.

Still, if all else fails, she could always go back to being an au pair for a European gun-dealer; or a painter in Amsterdam; or a...

Mal Armstrong



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THANKS ED, AND HERE WE HAVE A MAN WHO CLAIMS HE IS GOING TO MAKE ALL OF THE CITY'S V.I.P.S VANISH
UNLESS I RECEIVE 6.BILLION POUNDS IN CASH, SMALL DENOMINATIONS AND UNMARKED.
AND HOW DO YOU INTEND TO DO THIS? "SMIRK"
SIMPLE, I'LL PUT THEM IN THIS MACHINE I'VE MADE
DOES IT WORK? 'CHUCKLE.. GIGGLE.
YOU DON'T SEE MY UNCLE ALBERT KNOCKING AROUND.
HA HA YOU CALL THAT PROOF?..... WHERE ARE YOU TAKING ME?.. NOO.
IN THE MACHINE WITH HIM.... RICH CREEPS ARE YOU WATCHING?
HELP
WATCH DA GODDAM ROOF YA DUMB GEETUS
PIZZS!
AND THERE YOU HAVE IT FOLKS, ONE BROADCASTER LOST. MY APOLOGIES TO HIS FAMILY, THOUGH GONE, I'M SURE HE'S NOT FORGOTTEN.
HERBY HIT THE BOTTLE, PICKED IT UP AGAIN AND DRANK
R&W.

Stranded in Sheffield. Early evening. The cloudy city... Violent grey/black abstractions splattered against the sky. The home of teengenerate boys with hideous spot problems. Colourful threads splash washed-out denim, licking and fondling youthfull bodies like fire carressing flesh. Frownland. Sheffield. The home of musicians with no connecting thread other than the desire to make music: unique, experimental, enlightening, uplifting! No 'scene', no handy little pop pigeon-holes, only ideas and the desire to make people think.

Sheffield. The home of Cabaret Voltaire. Stranded. Late. A frantic phone call.

Richard Kirke's mother: "He's gone to see his girl-friend; he didn't think you were coming!"

A very worried writer beats his head off the telephone kiosk at Sheffield bus station.

One hour later, Chris Watson and Stephen Mallinder arrive just as this inky-fingered neck-end is walking the talking channel with Mrs Kirke: "OH, they just rang up, Chris and Mal(linder) have gone to find you!"

"Er...aye. I think a kin see thim - is Mal wearin' blueshews?"

"Yes, that sounds like him. Goodbye." Click. Buzz.

Gulp. I wander over. Our eyes clash and meet...friendly faces...thick Yorkshire accents: "Hello, we're Cabaret Voltaire. Richard had to go off somewhere..." Relief. Found.

"Em..yeah, I was just talkin' t' eez muthah. A thort it was yew!"

Introductions over, cold sweat retracts, we plunge into a rivulet of small talk; a taxi stops outside of Western Works - Cabaret Voltaire HQ - and we get out and enter.

Crowded together around a small table in the tiny work-shop where CV record, cluttered and cosy, good atmosphere...bit like a second-hand bookshop. I am interested...

Not many people interest or intrigue me anymore...even fewer groups..Throbbing Gristle, Dome, DAF...and Cabaret Voltaire.

Chris: "We don't see ourselves now as complete Dadaists, originally that was the intention, exactly what we set out to do."

- "WE DIDN'T WANT TO ENTERTAIN PEOPLE...
WE WANTED TO MAKE PEOPLE SCREAM!" - Max Ernst(?)

Mal: "More a case of making people think rather than scream; but, like Dada, our ideas slowly evolved."

Originally, Dada was the influence, but no more: CV are out on a limb of their own design. The three members are close, as only people who have worked together for many years with a purpose can be, their ideas mesh, they do not always understand each other: "Richard didn't know what the set-up was about, until I told him yesterday!" But they have a collective EMPATHY! Cabaret Voltaire against the world? NO!

Cabaret Voltaire against the IGNORANT! - The closed clique of minds ignoring the music in favour of handy little name-tags... How can you TELL people what to like when you don't know what to call it?!

CV are evasive...the music is available, but no personalities emerge...HA! A chink in the armour! Mr Critic, him point finger. COLD! CLINICAL! BLEAK! INDUSTRIAL! The comfy cliches spew forth...

Chris can see through the lies, he can expose the deceit: "Chance plays a big part in our music. My criticism of electronic music is that people have too much control over it."

The exceptionally pretty Mal agrees: "We're more accidental than most electronic bands such as Gary Numan, who are far too clinical."

In jazz terms, CV are hot rather than cool...bleak, my backside!

Chris: "The accidents come from the fact that we're not musicians in the traditional sense, although we have got control of the instruments now, but our technical ability is still very limited and that's where the accidents occur...AND they seem to fit in well!"

Cabaret Voltaire must be one of the most productive groups in the country - a string of fine singles: 'Extended Play', 'Nag, Nag, Nag', 'Silent Command', 'Three Mantras', and the more recent 'Seconds Too Late'; three of the best albums ever made: 'Mix Up', 'Live At The YMCA', and 'Voice Of America'; along with a cassette album of early material on Industrial Records; a cassette album by Richard Kirke, also on Industrial Records; all of which ensures that the band spend most of their time in the studio instead of on stage turning out stale pap for the masses to forget their smelly jobs to. Hence, CV are fresh, constantly developing, always finding something new to entice you with...a reason to keep your ears cocked. As Chris explained: "One of the reasons we've released so much material is that we don't play live an awful lot, and the thing we are most

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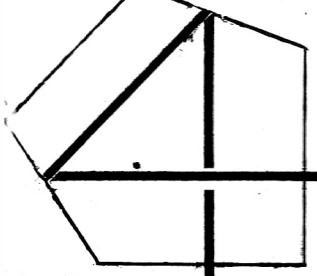

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interested in is recording. So we've concentrated on that side of it, and the things we've recorded, we've really liked. We've been able to release our stuff via Rough Trade at reasonable prices and we've done it because we want to get as much stuff as possible available to people on record. It's a good medium of communication really."

Mal elucidates further: "We weren't playing live because we intended having about two months off and do some recording. Because since 'Mix Up' came out, we had loads of ideas and just wanted to see them take shape."

I'd heard that pressure had been put on you by Rough Trade to release so many records...

"None at all, actually," Chris defends. "Quite the opposite, in fact. There's no pressure at all from Rough Trade 'cos of the system we've established with them. They used to pressure us into playing live more than recording, actually, but they found that they couldn't do that, so they tend to leave us alone now!"

Mal continues: "The pressure, if anything, would come the other way around, in that we could have more material than Rough Trade would have finance, so there's never any problems. They don't pressure us to bring new material out, and we hope that they've got enough money to bring out our material when it's ready, which they always have done."

Cabaret Voltaire have always seemed to me to be one of the most self-supporting groups, so I expressed my surprise that they preffered to release their records on Rough Trade rather than on their own label. Chris explained the signing:

"They approached us initially, and they had the money to be able to offer us the facilities to do some recording, which we didn't have at the time. They OFFERED us our own label, but we preffered Rough Trade and we LIKE their ideals."

The mention of 'ideals' and the nature of CV songs such as 'Kneel To The Boss' and 'Baader Meinhoff', makes me ask about the band's 'social conscience', for want of a better term. (And there must be at least ONE better term than 'social conscience', for Christ's sake. Answers on a postcard to...)

Some people have described 'Baader Meinhoff' as your radical chic number..

"Oh yeah, well that's just critics who don't know any better," sneers Chris, sounding slightly bitter. "The tape on that song was sent to us by a correspondent in Germany, and basically that song is just straight comment. One thing it is NOT is 'radical chic', although since we got the tape, the Post Office keep opening our mail!"

What about 'positive political action'. (YUK! There must be another term etc,etc...) You know, doing a benefit for RAR or RAS, or something like that?

"We've never been asked," says Mal.

"We did a London gig for Amnesty International," Chris continues, "and another one for Prisoners Unknown, but we don't go in for benefit gigs unless we've got a deep sympathy for what the organisers believe. With RAR in particular, a lot of shady things have gone wrong."

Mal is wary of RAR for several reasons: "One, because they rarely have black groups on, but also I don't like the chic aspect. And they also tend to be middle-class people who are more interested in getting support for the SWP than anything else.

"I don't fight anyone else's battles, and I don't expect them to fight mine for me."

It was obvious that CV had no time for mass movements, trends or handy little cliques, so it seemed equally obvious that my last question should be directed about the 'local' (in this case Sheffield) 'scene'. On this point both Chris ("It amused us more than anything") and Mal were adamant. The latter's comment summed up the whole illusion...

"Sheffield's no different from anywhere else. If there ever was a scene in Sheffield, It finished about three years ago!"

The interview was over at last, and it was worth all the trouble. A fine example of Cabaret Voltaire's intense and alienated attitude could be seen when Mal waited twenty minutes in the bitter cold, while I waited for a bus at the beginning of the M1! Most of my friends wouldn't have done that!

Cabaret Voltaire are easily one of the best, most important, most influential bands ever to have been hatched within the shadow of the Union Jack. They are capable of lifting your heart and derailing your senses, one of the few bands who can DO something with music - they can burn souls like Uri Geller can bend forks! All of their records are easily available, and they will not preach or condescend.

The CV experience is not always 'nice' or 'safe'... and to those of you who sneer, may you have all the money in the world and still not enough to pay your hospital bills. I need this band, I believe in them as a valid musical force, I believe in them as a TREAT, as FUN, and if I've got to scream and shout to make you see the OBVIOUS, then I'm not going to bother: you can be sedated with your Cheap Trick records and your bad dope.

I'm in love with mystery.. I'm in love with Cabaret Voltaire. I have no illusions Cabaret Voltaire will change the world - but they might change YOURS! They DEFINITELY changed mine! Thanks.

Mark Inmonger

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INTRODUCING.....

Prefab Sprout

Opinions change like coats of paint
We've come a long way - Hull to Hawaii
I've bought my children an endless diary
Ch-che-cherry tree.

'Cherry Tree' by Paddy McAloon

Occasionally, although it seems to happen less and less these days, you can be sitting in a pub watching a band or listening to the juke-box and suddenly you'll hear a song that so completely transcends anything else you've heard for ages that it makes you want to get up and buy everyone in the place a pint. The first time I heard Prefab Sprout perform 'Cherry Tree' was one such occasion. As guitarist/lead vocalist Paddy McAloon wrapped a sinuous guitar phrase around his brother Martin's acidic bass line, and cautiously revealed a lyric of undeniable potency, I felt an emotional response akin to that which I experienced on first hearing of Lennon's 'Cold Turkey' or Weller's 'Private Hell': a gut-feeling that here was a composer anxious - nay, desperate - to communicate his passion and pain to anyone willing to listen.

It's SO difficult to talk about that song," explains Paddy, shyly. "It's just that it's so very VERY personal. I wouldn't like to say something that would incriminate other people, do you know what I mean? How embarrassing!" he nervously laughs. "Basically, it's a whole jumble of elements, but I really did want to get away from writing songs that were 'messages'. Anyway, there was this cherry tree in my back garden which, in a certain way, seemed to sum up my feelings about various things - like my feelings towards my girlfriend for example - and I wrote a song about the way I felt. Yeah, that's it, I wrote a song about the way I FELT!"

Despite his reluctance to pin down the specifics of his inspiration, onstage, towards the end of the song, Paddy abandons any attempt to contain his emotions as he belts out the bathos-brimming "But I can't touch her / I'm not the gardener" climatic lines.

Does he ever feel embarrassed performing 'Cherry Tree'?

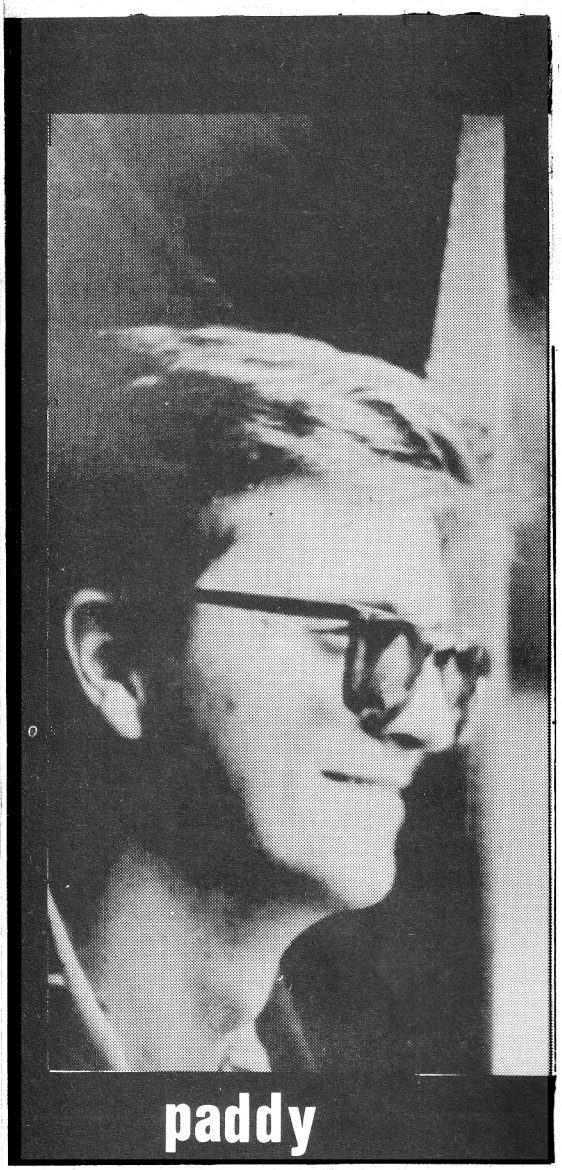
"No. Not at all. I'm PROUD to sing it. It's because you can, in a song like that, communicate something. You can communicate the ESSENCE of what made you feel like that in the first place without having to make any unnecessary admissions."

Although an evocative vocalist and a dexterous guitarist, Paddy is firstly and formostly a songwriter, and The Sprouts a 'song'band. Good songs, we agree, are the single most important factor in the make-up of any successful band. Van Dyke Parks, John Lennon and The Beach Boys are quoted as Paddy's favourite listening. Surprisingly, New Wave songwriters such as Weller, Costello and Pete Shelley aren't rated very highly in his view, and shares little empathy with them.

"Costello, I dislike intensely. I really don't know what all the fuss is about. I thought 'New Amsterdam' was good, I really liked that a lot, but nothing else. I wrote a letter to Melody Maker saying 'Why don't you send someone to review us because if you think that people like Costello, Nick Lowe and Any Trouble are songwriters, then you've got another thing coming'. It just leaves me speechless to think of the accolades that are piled up at the doors of these people. Paul Weller, he's another one."

What about the New Wave scene as a whole? After all, Prefab Sprout were formed in 1977 when gobbing was just catching on up here. Did that particular holocaust have much influence on the early Sprouts?

"I admired the attitude of people like Lydon, and whole-heartedly supported the notion that all the Rock Stars of the time should be done down, but not a lot of the music impressed me. I



paddy

thought Television were very good. Tom Verlaine's songs were very crafted; I mean, I didn't like everything they did, but Verlaine is a guy who constructs things instead of just blurts of passion."

As already mentioned, Prefab Sprout first saw light of day in 1977, originally under the moniker of The Dick Diver Band. Paddy and Martin decided to find a drummer to complement their duo, convinced that Paddy's songs deserved a wider audience than just the two of them. Long-time friend and would-be guitarist, Mick Salmon, was recruited once he'd learned the basics on the kit, and the band set out playing a set of 50% cover versions and 50% originals. A small but loyal following developed, a pub residency emerged, and a prestige support spot at Dunelm college with the Revillos put the band truly on the map. Although yet to grace the pubs of Newcastle with their sound, The Sprouts intend to correct that oversight henceforth, so keep your eyes and ears open for them.

Onstage, their main strength is the uncanny interplay between the instruments, the almost telepathic communication between the musicians which enables them to take a song to the brink of self-indulgence and back again without so much as a raising of the eyes. Paddy's emotionally expressive nerve-end vocal and his aloof stage presence make a pleasing contrast, too; one minute he's becoming frustrated and chiding himself for not being able to get his guitar in perfect tune, the next he's spilling out secrets from his own personal diary.

"I feel very self-concious when I'm onstage," confesses Paddy. "If I know a gig's going well, I get very heated if little things - which nobody notices anyway - start going wrong. Like getting my guitar in tune: I can't BEAR it if the damn thing is even slightly out of tune. That's one thing that I do get embarrassed about."

'Cherry Tree' is by no means the only song Prefab Sprout feature in their current set that is worthy of note. 'Faron Young', a song which questions the values of contemporary US country music; 'Ghost Town Blues', which features the exquisite line 'Find an answer / While I leave the room';and 'Radio Love', Paddy's confession of his relationship with pop music, are all worthy of mention. The latter, in particular, is a telling indication of Paddy's ability in the field of pop-chewn composition.

"'Radio Love' is a celebration of pop music," Paddy tells me with much gesturing and enthusiasm. "When you're told as a kid to stop wasting so much of your time listening to pop music on the radio - that there are 'better' things to do - I was trying to communicate the fact that no matter how many people tell you that there's no hope of you 'making it', no matter how many rational, reasonable arguments you hear for NOT playing, what can you do when your own personal feelings get hooked on pop music?"

He shakes his head, smiling, certain that the solution to that problem won't be found in a hurry.

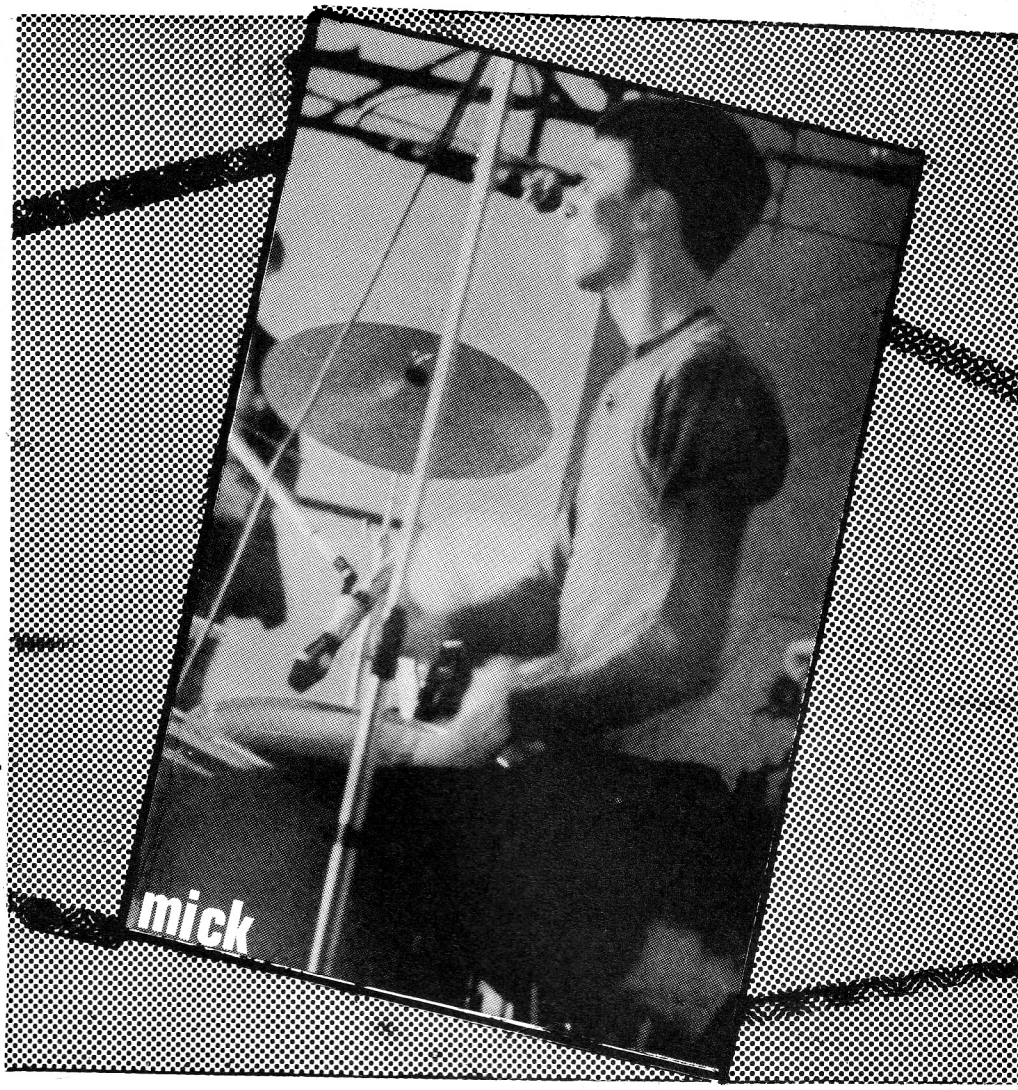
Prefab Sprout are confident without being cocky, serious without being morose, and absolutely certain of success sooner or later. Just how successful they become depends on their ability to grow as a musical unit, and on Paddy's endeavours to develop his songwriting.

martin

Niether of these obstacles should provide much of a problem for a band who's commitment is total and who's talent is obvious. It's time for them to spread their wings, and they know it; Paddy spoke of a toughening-up policy currently active in The Sprout camp, and of recording a representative demo tape in the very near future in an effort to entice record companies out of their cosy office blocks in London. In fact, if the record companies have any sense at all, they'll have someone on the next train northbound to check out this potentially lucrative outfit from the coal-seams of Durham, who're just waiting to be snapped up.

If the companies don't tune in to Prefab Sprout their excuse will be - as usual - that they are too too dumb and too out of touch; don't let that be your excuse too.

Mal Armstrong



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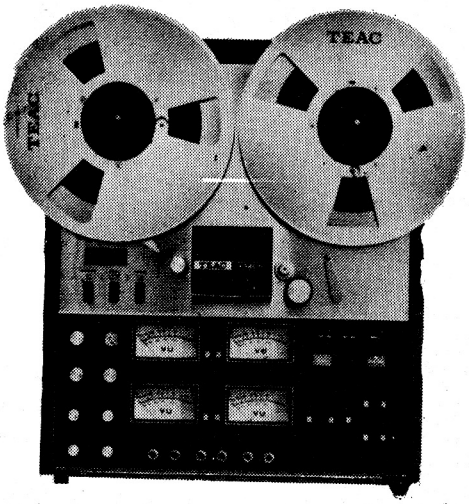


Quality — 4 — Track

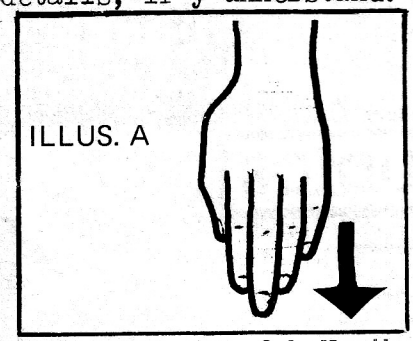
HELTER SKELTERING

T.H. BOGART, currently living the low-life in London, criticises North Eastern attitudes towards music, and tells us of his latest discovery, HUANG CHUNG

Oh, it's striking times we live in and no mistake.

People interested in the art and forces of rock'n'roll (HA! HA!) will have noticed the emergence of various pop music 'movements' situated around various parts of our country over the past few years. Recent ones include Manchester's Factory label, Edinburgh's Bob Last (to name but one), and Liverpool's Eric's Club (shut!) and Zoo axis.

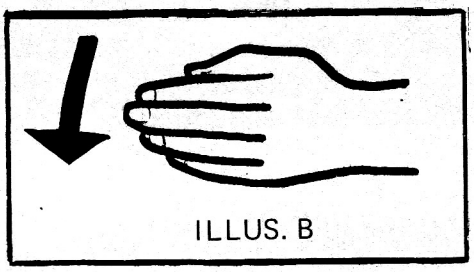
That paragraph gives you the barest reference point; this para... well, the next paragraph, actually... fills in your own provincial details, if y'unnerstand.



Where is the fab North East in all this supposed musical activity? Where are all the obscure records on obscure labels that will make me able to hold my head up in London's posey Blitz club, huh?

Maybe the actually do exist - even just in the minds of the impoverished part-time musicians, singers and poets of yer new beat generation; and maybe I'm already trying to save my face and my ignorance. Read on...

Footie, boxing and, more recently, rock'n'roll have become the personal and collective escape hatches for the work-a-day person in the big bad city. Onwards to rock'n'roll. Supposedly, rock'n'roll has done plenty to broaden the views and experience of young white people and, predominantly civilised white folks' primitivism (Whatever that means - Adam Ant). I call it 'dancing', and my Great Aunt calls it 'dirty'. I hear you shouting that our North East area has always been a hot-bed of talent. But what happens to it? It's wasted in a sea of provincial attitudes.



Their own worst enemies against the cosmopolitan 'smartness' of the London 'scene', for example.

Can you see Newcastle spawning a Spandau Ballet or two without at least one of them sporting a beer-gut above his sporran? Worse, how can you see them NOT being branded as 'sissies' in their home town.

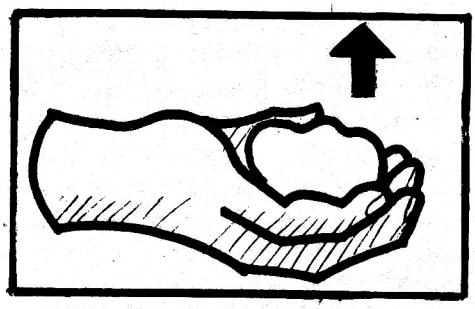
Every dull and dirty city makes the people who inhabit it want to get as dull and dirty as itself at times. The North East is no exception. Other provincial towns suffering from the same depression seem to be able to grow and support lots of new and important music (mostly on vinyl) and revamp and refurbish still worthwhile ideas in popular music. They make the North East's complacent 'scene' look jokey.

Question: Is this the area of the gifted amateur, or is it full of jokers? Or is it not full of anything?

Jarrow marchers WALKED to London in the thirties and handed in a PETITION!! A bloody PETITION!! Why are people in the North East so POLITE???

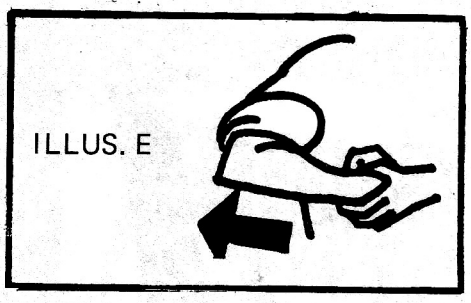
Onward to rock'n'roll. Johnny Rotten (Londoner) used to do a song in which all he shouted was that he wanted 'No Lip' from anyone. Sting (North Easterner), on the other hand, sings something about a 'Canary In A Coal Mine'. A right set of inverted romantics we are, aren't we? Lindisfarne's biggest hit was called 'Run For Home'!!!

What I'm clambering after here is the North East attitudes which won't allow its folk heroes/pop stars to push out into the darkness and create a music that is really new and changing. Cosmopolitan London lacks the roots of the North East's tight-knit communities, and in theis atmosphere all sorts of rootless sub-cultures grow without much stimulation. This attitude does seem to have appeared in the recent pop music of Manchester and Liverpool, and is something I am desperately searching for in the town I was born and brought up in.



Onward to rock'n'roll: Huang Chung are a great group based in London who will become famous (or will not become famous). They possess a sense of purpose and belief in what they do that puts most of our North East hopefuls well and truly in the shade.

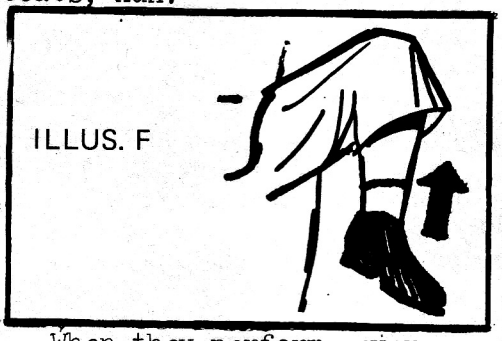
They existed on vinyl about a year or so ago with 'Isn't It About Time We Were On TV' on Rewind Records which, after a number of plays by Radio One's Simon Bates, plummeted into oblivion. Since that time, they've ostensibly reformed, had another independent single released, and turned into a working unit, inhabiting London's stinky pub circuit (At least they've GOT a pub circuit - Ed.)for some months.



Unlike many of yer new groups, who's idea seems to be to bind as many angular and disjointed musical notions in their search for something of worth, Huang Chung wish to remain in Rock's mainstream, to try to explore the 'skinning of the rock'n'roll cat' within its borders and in their own sweet way. And believe it or not, cynical rocksters, they are well on the trackeroo.

It probably says a lot for their talent in these austere times that they haven't been snapped into one of our record companies marketing slots i.e. signed up to make money and be stars. They have no insecurities/ pretensions regarding record companies, however, and believe that their future does not lie in seedy London pubs and clubs. J'ai understand that they have had their collective bums sniffed by CBS records.

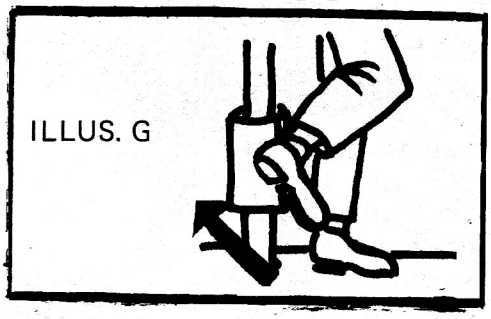
So why does clever old me rate them when they don't cling to kilts, bang on the big jungle drum, or fiddle around inside long dark overcoats, huh?



When they perform, every member sounds as if he can play TOO well. Their sound leans on the bass/drums axis of Nick O'Spigg and Charles Darwin (I kid you not about the names), who are basically TOO strong and direct for this world. Hogg Robinson is their sax and dark glasses person, and singer/guitarist/writer is Jack Hughes, who possesses vocal disdain of a David Bowie. His telecaster gives the group its moniker: when bashed, it voices 'HUANG' and 'CHUNG' respectively. Jack's songs are yer view of humanity, already well documented by others, but in Jack's case so in line with the musical arrangements as to be another step up THAT ladder.

I asked Huang Chung why they had been so good together for so long without much success, why they hadn't split up to further their careers. Their obvious answer was a belief in their songs. Maybe this belief is what I appreciate most in this deceitful age. They are so talented that they could desert their standards and cash in a lot more than they appear to be at the minute. Lots of rock stars have done in the past; I hope Huang Chung don't.

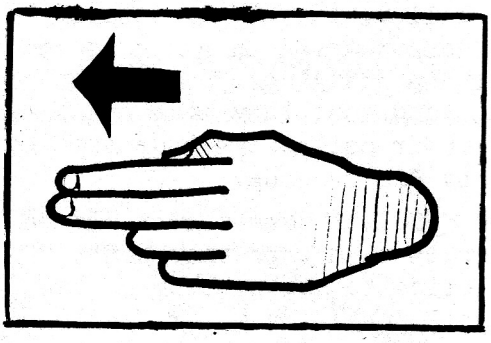
Huang Chung possess a tension, fight and belief in what they do that makes them vital, even in these hip days of 'rock thinking'. They pale our provincial groups in attitude, style, intention and content, and it saddens me to think that geography can play such a big part in pop.



Alright, you lot, so you haven't got a job? Yes - you're right to blame your government! But do I hear you crying out for ANY employment whatsoever to alleviate the ignominy and depression of being unemployed? You creeps! Stuff it! Don't try to hide behind some ridiculous job like making washers in some permafrost factory, which won't even be used to construct anything! Hopeless!

Never in the history of the British Employed Classes have so many been involved in the same line of (un)work. The government WANTS you to be out of work to uphold its economic policies. You're doing Maggie a FAVOUR by staying on the sausage roll as long as possible, doncha know! All Maggie's ideas point to a situation where loads of folk will be idle for a long period - your government wants you to be idle and unproductive! Another strange but true tale of the modern economy.

Onward to rock'n'roll. Your writer can hardly face the North East's attitudes to his pet love/hate subject - pop music. In the next two years, I'm going to hate to see my hometown wallowing in outdated, insensitive and totally false pop music. Onward to rock'n'roll. As pop music is THE main youth culture point, the North East artists owe it to themselves to grasp the situation and use it to their own ends. In the same breath, I would bawl that they should NOT merely copy and form a 'musical scene' of its own. The aim must be to transmit something that will go further than the city limits, even if its just to let the rest of the country know that people are still alive up there! If it's genuine and uplifting and cheap to witness, then your audience should start crawling out of the woodwork. (Don't blame me if they don't though!)



Things to make and do - if you want to: the tossers who got themselves to write for this very distorted publication, did so with the crazed notion of chronicling a non-existant North East music scene! Talk about crazy! And you thought that type of swashbuckling died with Errol Flynn!

You too could publish your own diatrabes. Turn your back on the 'me' generation altogether! Be a musical group! Even better, be an unmusical group! Be the poet of the new Beat Generation! Yes, open a coffee bar for layabouts to layabout in!

Or don't...lie there like some piece of tainted pork and wait for your leaders to set you back to slavery.

But think of the fun, kiddies! Think up new, enjoyable, uselessly abstract jobs to replace the old, unenjoyable uselessly abstract jobs that your government calls industrial growth. As long as you don't make more than £2 a week at it, the sausage roll can't touch you!

There must be SOMETHING that you can try to make for yourself and others around you that'll make us all feel on top of the world!

It won't last forever, but you might think of something else on the way.

T.H. Bogart.

Tomatoier back issues

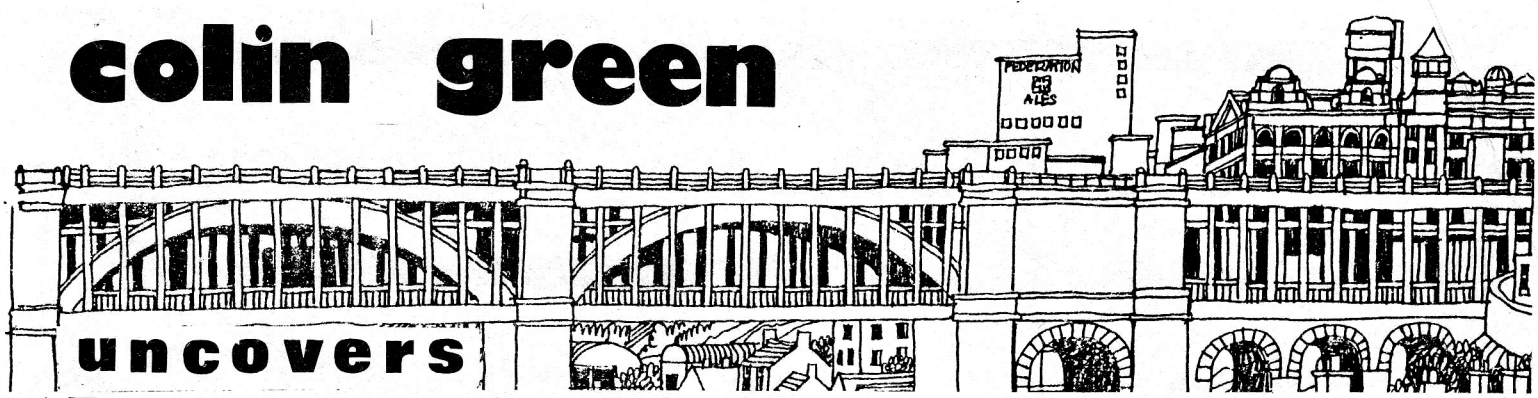
Issue no.1 : Legendary first issue featuring Nick Lowe, NATI Pop, and Punishment Of Luxury.
Unbelievably tatty collectors item!

Issue no.2 : Phil Lynott, Chelsea, Human League, Heavy Metal.
A landmark in bad journalism!

Issue no.3 : If you're in a local band, chances are you'll be in the mag! Also features Spizz, Clash and Wah! Heat.

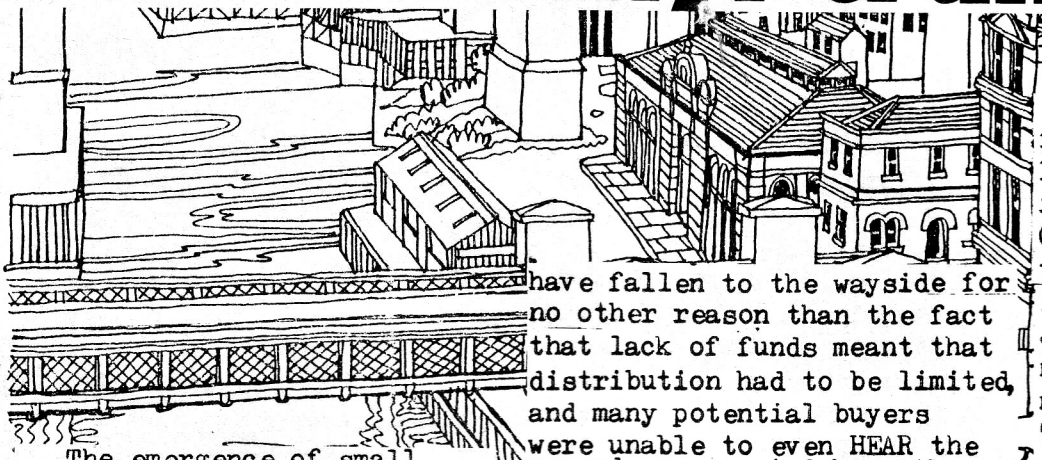
All still available for a mere 50p (inc P&P) from 86 Nile St. G/hd.

colin green



uncovers

the n.e. vinyl trail of 1980



The emergence of small, independent record labels during the past few years has given rise to a deluge of low-budget, locally distributed singles in most provincial towns and cities. Newcastle's own Neat Records and Blueport Records are two examples of indies who have given bands a start, and the confidence and encouragment to finance their own projects or even to form their own labels. The development of cheap-rate recording time at studios such as Lynx and Basement has also made it possible for bands to record their original material.

This upsurge in the indies market has meant that the more musically aware record buyer can, if he or she wishes, deviate from the trash churned out by many of the larger companies, who only have the Radio One playlist in mind.

Newcastle has had its fair share of independent releases in 1980. The main problem for most of the local bands who recorded a single last year was that of distribution. A lot of highly original and potentially successful singles have fallen to the wayside for no other reason than the fact that lack of funds meant that distribution had to be limited, and many potential buyers were unable to even HEAR the record, never mind have the opportunity to buy it. One such single was Hot Snax' excellent 'Theme From A Movie', which received airtime on Radio One for a while, but subsequently disappeared into oblivion. Marshall Hall, bassist with the band, told me that the reason for the single's decline could be attributed in total to the band's lack of finance, and although some record companies were interested in the 45, none were willing to take the risk and give it a national distribution. More's the pity.

Another band 'singled' out by Radio One are The Monoconics, who's three-track 45 on Zone One Records was certainly one of 1980's better local releases. Consisting of three original numbers - 'Exit Stage Left', 'Sensible Breakdown' and 'Such A Shame' - it was recorded in Rochdale at Cargo Studios. Although released in the Autumn, it still has to make an impact sales-wise, but with John Peel giving it repeated plays it's still in with a good chance.

Northern Heavy Metal reared its ugly head again in 1980, and at the vanguard in Newcastle were The Tygers Of Pan Tang. Despite the fact that I personally loathe most H.M. music - the likes of Judas Priest and Saxon make me want to puke - I found myself actually enjoying The Tygers' 'Rock'n'Roll Man', which was nothing less than top-quality rock'n'roll. The B side features 'All Right On The Night' and 'Wildcats', which makes it a fair swap for your inflated pound-note.

It's strange, but most of the singles I could get my hands on were extremely good value material-wise. Releases by The M.P.'s, (Acid Nose Product), Warning (Oven Ready Records) and Seven Minutes (Slam Records), all contained four very good tracks, with the latter being the best value for money; 'Remember' and 'Dancing In China' are particularly effective.

Space dictates that I'm unable to mention all the locally produced singles of 1980, but some of those which I heard and are worthy of a plug include Disorder's '1984'/'Reality Crisis'; Rival Savages 'Communication Breakdown'; Flesh's 'My Boy Lollipop'; Sabre Jets' 'Voodoo Cave'/'At The Quayside' The Crime's 'Johnny Come Home'/'Generation Gap' and David Baird's 'Friday Night'.

Keep them coming in '81!

Colin Green

A MESSAGE FROM THE BUNKER

This particular space was originally intended for advertising (which never emerged anyway), but more pressing matters - namely, our intended cassette album of local colour - has meant a hasty, last-minute change of plans. That is to say, if this article is full of spelling mistakes, it's because I'm using a borrowed typewriter and it's 4 a.m.

Firstly, what a poor response we had to our appeal for bands to inform us th that they were interested in appearing on a cassette album. Thanks a lot to those people who wrote to me, all of you will be included on the tape.

BUT.... the rest of you idle sods really did surprise me. You don't really deserve another chance, but because I'm becoming nearer to becoming a saint every day - as anyone who works on this mag will confirm - I'm prepared to give you one.

Now listen, because this applies to EVERYONE - even those of you who wrote me a letter.

This is what you must do:-

1) Anybody interested in appearing on the Helter Skelter Cassette Album must send a tape (preferably a reel to reel, but cassettes might be acceptable) to 86 Nile St., Gateshead by April 1st (great date, eh!). This tape must have no more than TWO tracks on it, and those two tracks MUST be ORIGINAL.

2) If, by any chance, we don't get the desired response - and we're thinking in terms of thirty bands - we won't be able to go ahead with the project, which would be a sad, sad thing to happen. So get your tape to us NOW!

3) This is strictly a first-come, first-serve affair, and anyone looking to get rich out of this thing would be better off filling the pools in.

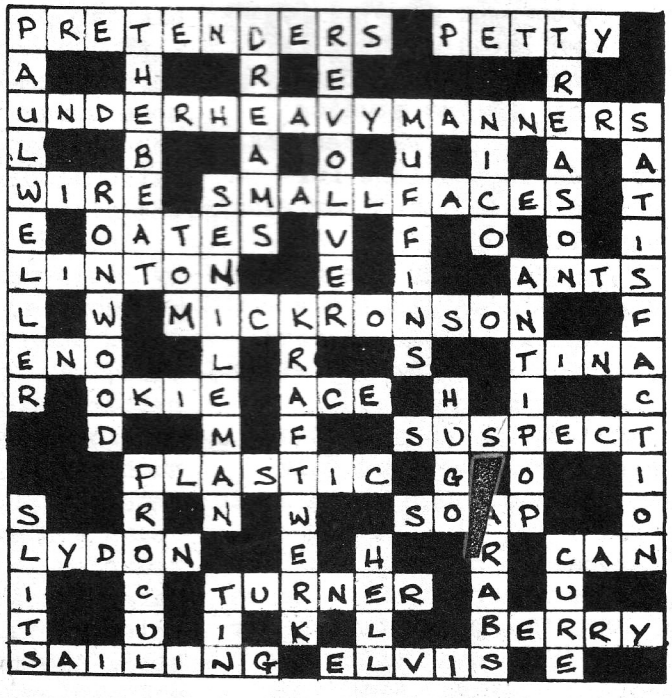
So that's it. With a bit of luck, the cassette album will be available to anyone who wants it by the end on April, and we'll make sure all of the reputable record companies get a copy.

It all depends on how many bands want to be included, and remember, ANYONE who does ANYTHING has got a chance of being the star of the show.

Enough of the chat, let's see just a little bit of action, eh chaps?

Mal Armstrong

SOLUTION TO ISSUE 3


PRETENDERS PETTY
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UNDERHEAVYMANNERS
L B A O U I A A
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S R N W SOAP O
LYDON E H R CAN
I C TURNER A U
T U I K L BERRY
SAILING ELVIS E

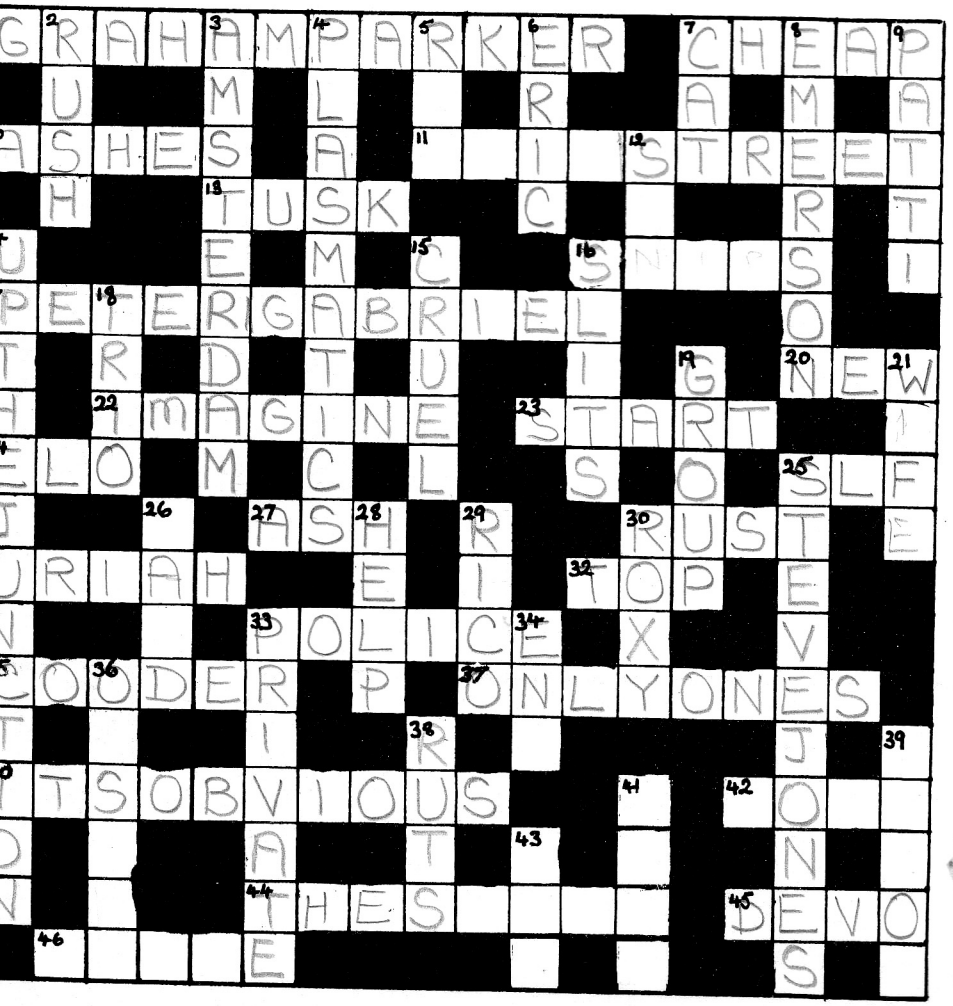
Skelter Word:

across

1. Rumour monger, perhaps? (6,6)
7. Tricky one, this! (5)
10. Bowie's cinders! (5)
11. Stones exile area (4,6)
13. Fleetwood Mac's jumbo tooth (4)
16. Formerly lead vocalist with The Sharks, now a solo artist (5)
17. Tree Lip Barge (5,7 - Anagram)
20. Costello single of 1980 (3,9) (and 3 down)
22. Posthumous Lennon hit (7)
23. Jam get going! (5)
24. Olé! It's Jeff Lynne's band (3)
25. Fingers abbreviated (3)
27. Wishbone remains (3)
30. It never sleeps, sang Neil (4)
31. Heep by name, heap by nature (5)
32. ZZ at the pinnacle (3)
33. The boys in blue (6)
35. Ry, bopping 'til he drops (6)
37. Best known for 'Another Girl, Another Planet' (4,4)
40. Au Pairs indie chart-topper (3,7)
42. ? by ? (4)
44. 'Jeopardy' is their first LP (3,5)
45. Are they not men? (4)
46. Supertramp's sin of 100yrs! (5)

down

2. Canadian HM trio (4)
3. See 20 across
4. Head case Yanks, released 'Butcher Baby' last year (10)
5. Fab Macca solo LP (3)
6. Wreckless or Clapton (4)
7. Mr Stevens, the tillerman (3)
8. The 'E' of ELP (7)
9. Ms. Smith, the Noo Yurk poetess (5)
12. Here it comes, sang Beatle George (3)
14. Squeeze hit of '79 (2,3,8)
15. One must suffer to be kind, sang Mr Lowe (5)
16. Ari, Tessa, Palmolive (5)
18. A three-piece (4)
19. Once called 'combos', now called 'bands', and somewhere inbetween called this. (ok, it's a useless clue!) (5)
21. John Entwhistle wrote a song about his! (Another useless one) (4)
25. Once a pistol, now a proffesional (5,5)
26. 'Big Pink' was their classic LP (4)
28. Beatles movie (4)
29. Specials sidekick! (4)
30. Infamous London Punk club of 76-78 (4)
33. Grace Jones' secret existance (7)
36. Another bunch of cults! (6)
38. Now with D.C. on the end (4)
39. A.K.A. Hercules John (5)
41. He can't fail, sang Strummer (4)
43. Magic transport from The Who (3)



peel off back & wear with pride!

free badge

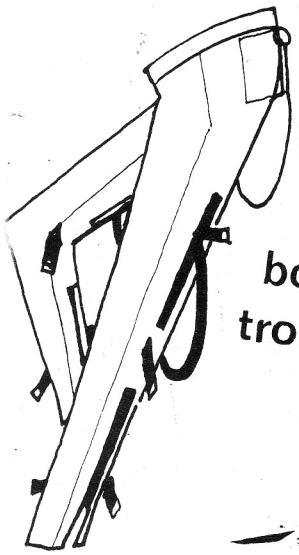
Skelter

TITS f ges and Clothes

TELL IT
T-SHIRTS

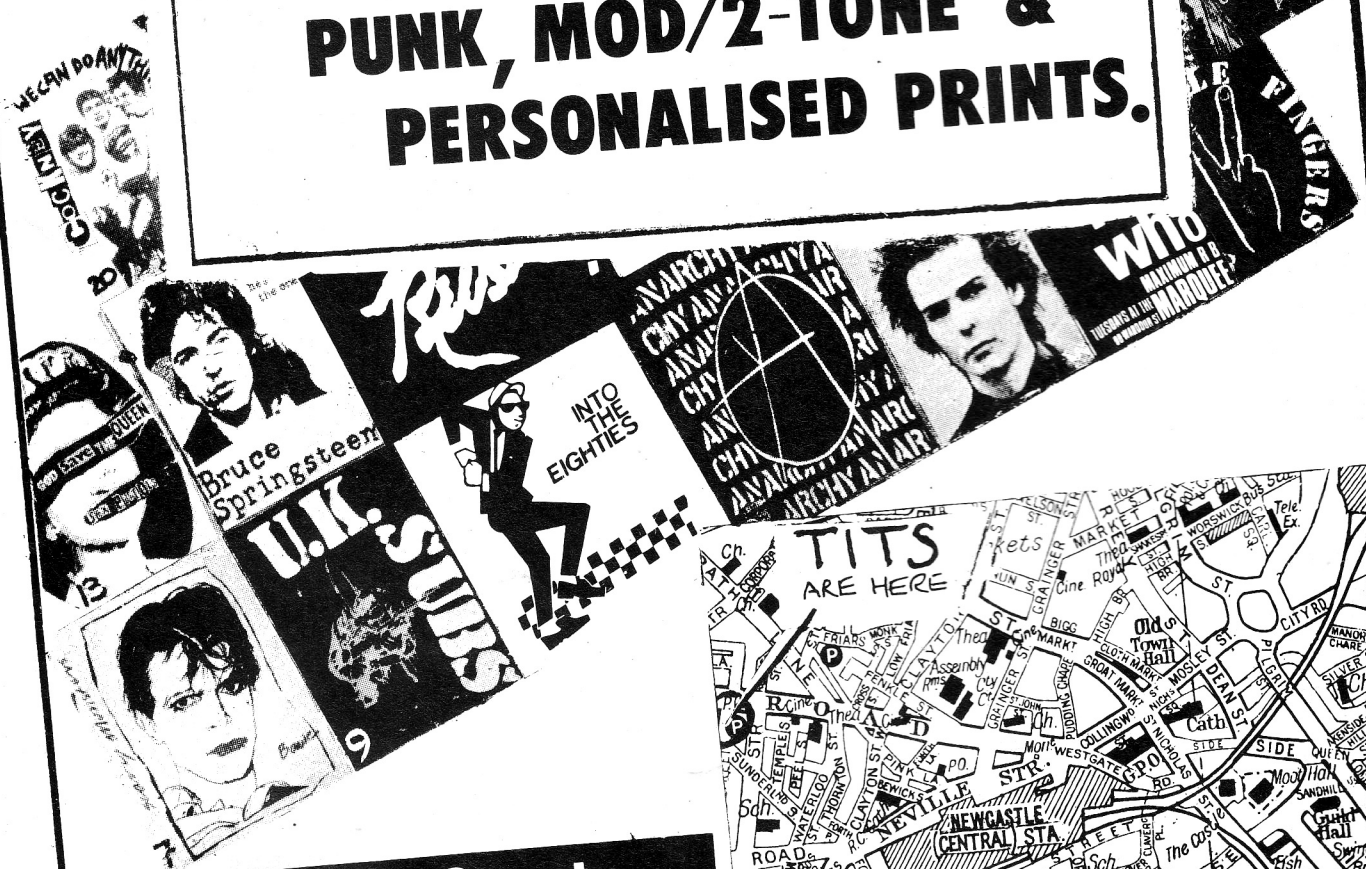
TiTS

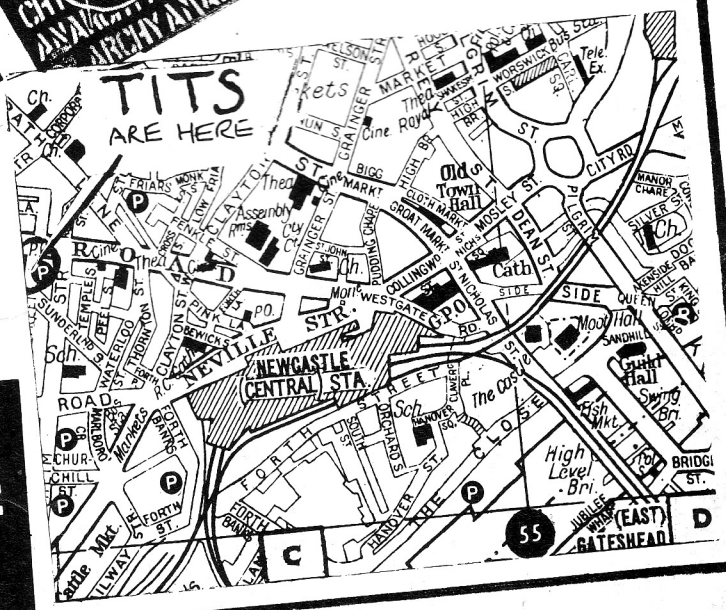
leathers



bondage
trousers

TITS FOR HEAVY METAL,
PUNK, MOD/2-TONE &
PERSONALISED PRINTS.





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